

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCS-03

SCA-01 A-01 OPR-02 SSO-00 AID-05 FDRE-00 /067 W

----- 018192

R 151004Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2769

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSSAG NKP THAI

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 6455

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AMEMR, SOPN, CB, US

SUBJECT: AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR U.S.

PRESS CORPS UNDER "EAGLE PULL"

REF: BANGKOK 6379 (CAMBODIA-B NO. 21)

CAMBODIA-B NO. 24

1. EVACUATION PLANNING WAS ESTABLISHED WITH THE U.S. PRESS CORPS IN PHNOM PENH SOME EIGHT WEEKS PRIOR TO "EVACUATION DAY", APRIL 12. ALL AMERICAN PRESS REPS, INCLUDING THEIR TCN'S , WERE INFORMED OF THESE PROCEDURES. PRIOR TO EVACUATION DAY THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER INCLUDED AN ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL DOZEN FOREIGN JORNALISTS IN THE PLAN ALTHOUGH, BASED ON DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE, FOREIGN NEWSMEN WERE NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY. WE INCLUDED THEM BECAUSE THE FIXED WING EVACUATION DURING THE PREVIOUS FOUR DAYS OF THE BULK OF OUR KHMER EMPLOYEES AND THEIR DEPENDENTS FREED SPACE FOR OTHER POTENTIAL EVACUEES ON THE "EAGLE PULL" CHOPPERS. IN ESSENCE, THE ENTIRE PRESS COMMUNITY, FOREIGN AND AMERICAN, WAS ALERTED TO AN IMMINENT EVACUATION THOUGH THE PRECISE DAATE, FOR SECURITY PURPOSES, WAS CONFIDENTIAL
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NOT MAKE KNOWN. DETAILS OF THE SCENARIO THAT TRANSPIRED ON THE FINAL DAYS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

2. ON THE AFTERNOON OF FRIDAY, APRIL 11, THE PAO CONTACTED THE "PRESS LIAISON OFFICER" FOR THE EVACUATION, MATT FRANJOLA, AP, AND INFORMED HIM THAT, BEGINNING THE NEXT DAY, SATURDAY, APRIL 12, HE SHOULD INSTITUTE AN 0700 HOURS "CHECK-OFF" OF ALL U.S. AND FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AT THE HOTEL LE PHNOM, THE PRESS ASSEMBLY POINT FOR PRE-EVACUATION PROCEDURES. THE URGENCY OF THIS MEETING WAS UNDERLINED, WITH THE CAUTION THAT PRESS AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES BE PREPARED FOR AN IMMINENT EVACUATION THAT COULD COME EITHER THE SAME DAY OR A SUBSEQUENT DAY. REGULAR "CHECK-IN" BY EACH U.S. NEWSMAN WITH THE PRESS LIAISON OFFICER HAD ALREADY BEEN ESTABLISHED AS AN OPERATING PROCEDURE. THIS SYSTEM ENSURED A DAILY MONITORING OF THE PRECISE WHEREABOUTS OF EACH NEWSMAN IN THE EVENT OF AN UNEXPECTED NOTIFICATION BY THE US. EMBASSY TO EVACUATE. THE STAGING POINT FOR U.S. JOURNALISTS FOR THE EVACUATION ITSELF WAS THE EMBASSY COMPOUND. THIS MESSAGE, TOO, HAD REPEATEDLY BEEN TRANSMITTED TO AMERICAN NEWSMEN. DETAILED GUIDELINES ON BAGGAGE WEIGHTS ALLOWABLE AND ESTIMATED TIME FOR DEPARTURE PREPARATIONS HAD ALSO BEEN PROVIDED OVER A PERIOD OF WEEKS PRIOR TO THE EVACUATION.

3. A POST-EVACUATION CHECK WITH FRANJOLA, THE PRESS LIAISON OFFICER, REVEALED THAT ATTENDANCE AT THE 0700 APRIL 12 MEETING AT THE HOTEL LE PHNOM, HAD BEEN, AS NEARLY AS COULD BE ASCERTAINED, "NEARLY 100 PERCENT". WORD OF MOUTH WOULD TAKE CARE OF ANY ABSENTEES SINCE THE PRESS WERE LODGED IN EITHER OF TWO HOTELS, THE PHNOM AND THE MONOROM.

4. THE EVENING OF APRIL 11, SYD SCHANBERG, NY TIMES, TELEPHONED DCM KEELEY AND SDKED, "WHAT IS ALL THIS BUSINESS ABOUT A MEETING TOMORROW MORNING AT 0700 HOURS FOR THE PRESS AT THE HOTEL PHNOM? THE DCM REMINDED SCHANBERG THAT THIS WAS PART OF THE NECESSARY EVACUATION PREPARATIONS FOR THE PRESS BUT FOR REASONS OF SECURITY THE DCM DID NOT CONFIRM THAT THE EVACUATION
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WAS ALREADY SET FOR THE FOLLOWING MORNING.

5. AT 0700 HOURS ON APRIL 12, THEN, THE PRESS RECEIVED THE WORD TO EVACUATE FROM THE PAO THROUGH FRANJOLA WHILE THEY WERE ASSEMBLED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MISSION PLAN, AT THE PHNOM HOTEL. BY 0745 HOURS THE FIRST OF A TWENTY-SEVEN MAN U.S. PRESS CORPS AND THEIR FIVE TCN'S BEGAN ARRIVING AT THE EMBASSY COMPOUND TO BE PROCESSED. ANOTHER EIGHT TO TEN FOREIGN NEWSMEN SUBSEQUENTLY JOINED THEM IN THE EVACUATION.

6. A MONKEY WRENCH WAS THROWN INTO THE MACHINERY AT 0740 HOURS WHEN THE PAO LEARNED THAT THE THREE AMERICAN NETWORKS, ABC, CBS AND NBC, TOGETHER WITH THE WIRE SERVICES, HAD ORDERED IN A CHARTERED AIRCRAFT WHICH WAS DUE TO ARRIVE AT 1100 HOURS THE SAME MORNING TO EVACUATE "SOME OF THE AMERICAN PRESS REPRESENTATIVES AND THEIR LOCAL STAFFS AND TCN'S". AT THIS POINT, THE DCM AND THE PAO IMMEDIATELY DROVE TO THE HOTEL PHNOM AND INFORMED FRANJOLA, IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE LANGUAGE, THAT THE CHARTER AIRCRAFT WAS A MISTAKE, THAT IT JEOPARDIZED "EAGLE PULL"., WHICH WAS SCHEDULED TO BE TERMINATED APPROXIMATELY ONE-HALF HOUR BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE CHARTERED AIRCRAFT. FINALLY, THE DCM, IN UNMISTAKABLE CLEAR LANGUAGE, TOLD FRANJOLA THAT HE SHOULD INFORM ALL OF THE PRESS AT ONCE THAT THOSE WHO DID NOT REPORT TO THE EMBASSY COMPOUND BY 0900 HOURS WOULD FIND THEMSELVES LEFT BEHIND. THIS STATEMENT WAS MADE AT 0750 HOURS.

7. BY 0900 HOURS ALL BUT A HANDFULL OF THE AMERICAN PRESS AND THEIR TCN'S HAD OBEYED THIS INSTRUCTION AND WERE ON TRUCKS BOUND FOR THE LANDING ZONE AND WAITING HELICOPTERS. FIVE AMERICAN JOURNALISTS CHOSE TO IGNORE THIS INSTRUCTION AND DECIDED TO REMAIN BEHIND. THEY WERE IDENTIFIED PRIOR TO THE DEPARTURE AS: SYD SCHANBERG, NYTIMES, LEE RUDAKEWITCH, ABC, DENIS CAMERON, FREELANCE, AL ROCKOFF, FREELANCE, AND RICHARD BOYLE, PACIFIC NEWS SERVICE. THE PAO PERSONALLY PLEADED WITH, WARNED AND EXHORTED SCHANBERG, BOYLE AND ROCKOFF AT THE EMBASSY COMPOUND GATE TO "USE
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THEIR HEADS AND NOT MAKE THEMSELVES MARTYRS". RUDAKEWITCH AND CAMERON DID NOT MAKE THEIR APPEARANCE AT ALL AT THE COMPOUND. AT ABOUT 0900 SCHANBERG ASKED THE DCM IF WE WOULD EVACUATE HIS KHMER STRINGER AND HIS FAMILY SINCE THERE WAS SPACE AVAILABLE ON THE JUST-THEN ARRIVING CHOPPERS, THE DCM SAID YES. THE DCM ASSUMED SCHANBERG WOULD DEPART WITH HIS LOCALS. SCHANBERG CLEARED THEM THROUGH OUR PROCESSING SYSTEM AND THEN LEFT THE EMBASSY COMPOUND. AT 0945 HOURS THE PAO, AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER (AT 1010) THE AMBASSADOR AND DCM, DEPARTED AS PART OF THE FINAL WAVE OF EVACUEES.

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCS-03

SCA-01 A-01 OPR-02 SSO-00 AID-05 FDRE-00 /067 W

----- 024172

R 151004Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2770

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSAAG NKP THAI

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 BANGKOK 6455

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8. IN ADDITION TO THE FIVE AMERICAN "STAY BEHINDS".
AN ESTIMATED HALF-DOZEN FOREIGN NEWSMEN INCLUDING
GERMAN AND SWEDISH TELEVISION CREWS, AND ONE CORRES-
PONDENT FOR LE MONDE (PARTICE DE BEER), ALSO ELECTED
TO REMAIN BEHIND.

9. IN REVIEWING ALL OF THE PRE-DEPARTURE PREPARATIONS
AND PROCEDURES INSTITUTED TO ALERT AND ASSIST THE
PRESS IN THE EVACUATION, INCLUDING THE FINAL CLARION
CALL, THE MISSION FEELS THAT ALL THAT WAS HUMANLY
POSSIBLE WAS DONE TO ASSURE THE SAFE DEPARTURE OF THE

AMERICAN JOURNALISTS AND, THOUGH IT WAS NOT OUR DIRECT
RESPONSIBILITY, THAT OF THE FOREIGN PRESS ALSO.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EVACUATION PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BANGKO06455
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750131-1007
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750447/aaaabrpf.tel
Line Count: 223
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BANGKOK 6379, 75 (CAMBODIA-B, 75 N2
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUL 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <10 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR U.S. PRESS CORPS UNDER "EAGLE PULL"
TAGS: AEMR, CB, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006